

ACTS 8:26-40

INTRODUCTION

- One of the things that seems crazy to me is how many of life's biggest moments hinge on what feel like random ones.
 - One small decision...
 - And your life splits in two completely different directions.
- I think of meeting my wife.
 - A messy, complicated chain of events landed her in a new country, a new city, and a new high school—where yours truly saw her and fell in love.
 - If one of any number of details had gone differently—and some of them *should* have gone differently—we'd never have met.
- Do you have something like that?
 - The college roommate you were randomly assigned—became a lifelong friend.
 - The job you almost didn't apply for—turned into a career you love.
 - You moved to Knoxville for college or a season—and now it's been twenty years.
 - You googled churches, picked one to visit—and the friends you've made here feel like family.
- At the time, it didn't feel monumental.
 - It felt almost accidental.
 - When you look at your spouse, your kids, your friends, your job, your life—you realize how fragile the chain of events really was.
 - One different choice. One missed bus. One swipe left instead of right.
 - And everything changes.
- And yet, deep down, part of you also feels differently.
 - It doesn't feel like chaos.
 - Somehow it feels like it had to be this way.

[Transition]: Acts 8 helps us make sense of these moments.

- A glimpse behind the curtain at a moment that looks random but isn't.
- Because at the center of the story is the God who goes before us.

God goes before us. That's what I'd like to talk to you about today.

CONTEXT

- As we saw last week, Philip has been part of something remarkable in Samaria.
 - People are coming to faith.
 - Demons are being cast out.
 - Healing is taking place.
 - There are crowds and momentum.
 - Fruit is visible.
- When suddenly, God interrupts him.
 - Not to start something.
 - But to step into something God has already begun.

[Transition]: Let's enjoy our way through this story and see the God who goes before us.

CONTENT

[Philip]

- **V26:** Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.
 - No explanation. No strategy. No outcome promised.
 - Just two commands: Rise and go.
 - **Rise:** Leave Samaria. The revival. The crowds. The momentum.
 - **And go.** From visible fruit to a desert road.
- I don't know how I'd have responded—but Philip's response in **V27** is incredible:
 - God told him to **rise and go**.
 - So in **V27**—do you see it there?—he **rose and went**.
 - He doesn't stall. He doesn't question. He doesn't ask for clarity or an explanation.
 - He just does exactly what he's been told
- There's a beautiful simplicity to obedience.
 - Living as God commands is always the best plan.
 - Even if we don't fully understand it.
 - Even if we're not sure how it will work out.
 - The best move is always to obey without delay—trusting him to work the details out.
 - If there's something he's nudging you to do—in his word or by his Spirit—do it.
 - In the end, you won't regret it.

[Transition]: Philip certainly experienced that.

- He rises and goes.
- And when he gets there, he finds God's already there—God has gone before.

[The Ethiopian Eunuch]

- **V27** introduces us to the next character: **And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.**
 - This guy is the CFO of Ethiopia.
 - Which means he's a eunuch—royal lineage was so important that any man who worked closely with the Queen would be castrated, just in case.
 - Apparently, he really wanted this job!
 - It's given him an education, power, and money.
 - But it's also left him spiritually hungry.
- **V27** tells us **he had come to Jerusalem to worship.**
 - Something's missing.
 - Have you ever felt like that?
 - You've made it to the place you wanted to get to—that graduation, relationship, promotion, financial situation.
 - But it hasn't given you all you hoped—it still feels like something's missing.
 - That's where our eunuch finds himself—he has everything, but it's not enough.
 - So he goes on a spiritual pilgrimage.
 - A journey of over 1,000 miles.
 - He walked 500 miles...
 - And then he walked 500 more...
 - But when he made it to Jerusalem to worship, he'd have discovered that he wasn't allowed in the temple.
 - First, because he wasn't Jewish—foreigners weren't allowed in.
 - Second, because he's a eunuch—the law forbade him to enter.
- So now, **V28**, he's on his way home, pondering it all as he reads **the prophet Isaiah.**
 - But now we start to see that God is already up to something.
 - Before telling Philip to **rise and go**:
 - God had already stirred this man's heart.
 - God had already put Isaiah in his hands.
 - God had already timed the journey.
- And now, in **V29**, our two characters meet—a divine appointment.
 - **V29: The Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."**
 - So Philip runs over, jogs alongside the chariot, hears him reading, and asks if he understands what he's reading.
 - The eunuch—so absorbed in the text that he doesn't seem to blink at this uninvited guest—replies that he can't understand without a guide and then asks Philip to hop in and explain it.
- They're at **V7 of Isa 53**—which is quoted in **V32** of our text: **Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his**

mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.

- Who is the prophet talking about, the eunuch asks in **V34**—about himself or about someone else?
- Then, **V35**: Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus—there’s another character in our text...

[Jesus]

- When he hears **the good news about Jesus**, the eunuch responds immediately:
 - He believes!
 - But then he asks a plaintive question: **V36: What prevents me from being baptized?**
 - I used to think this was a happy, rhetorical question.
 - But the context shows us it’s sad.
 - I’ve been rejected from the place of worship—so maybe something is holding me back?
 - The fact that I’m a foreigner?
 - The fact that I’m a eunuch?
 - Something else?
 - No, Philip, answers—nothing is holding you back.
 - So, in **V38** they stop the chariot, and Philip baptizes him on the spot.
 - The gospel of Jesus includes everyone.
 - It’s not limited to any social class or ethnic group—one commentator points out that this truth is beautifully illustrated by the fact that, “*The first non-Jew to come to faith and baptism in Luke’s great story is a black man from Africa.*”¹

God went before them—to bring this man to faith.

- With that, our story comes to an abrupt end...
 - The Spirit who brought them together separates them.
 - Philip is carried away.
 - And the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing.
 - We don’t know exactly what happened next, but it’s clear that God continued to go before them.
 - In **V40 Philip** finds himself in new towns where God has work for him to do.
 - And the **eunuch**, well get this...
 - We don’t know for sure...
 - But if he kept reading Isaiah on his journey home—as he had been doing before Philip’s divine interruption—it wouldn’t have taken him long to get from **chapter 53**, where he left off with Philip, to these words in **chapter 56**:²

³ Let not the **foreigner** who has joined himself to the LORD say,
 “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;
 and let not the **eunuch** say,
 “Behold, I am a dry tree.”
⁴ For thus says the LORD:
 “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
 who choose the things that please me
 and hold fast my covenant,
⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls
 a monument and a name
 better than sons and daughters;
 I will give them an everlasting name
 that shall not be cut off.

- Philip is given purpose and the eunuch is given assurance—because God is the God who goes before.

[Summary]

- Do you see it in this story?
 - **Philip** thinks he’s being interrupted—but he’s being sent.
 - The **eunuch** thinks he’s searching—but he’s being sought.
 - And in the middle of it all stands **Jesus**—the lamb who was led to the slaughter, cut off so all could be included.
- Behind every nudge and every question, there is a God who has already gone before—arranging, stirring, preparing, saving.
 - This is not a story about two men who happened to meet on a desert road.
 - It’s a story about the God who goes before.

[Transition]: Let me suggest a few things we might do with this truth this morning.

CONSEQUENCE

1. If you wouldn’t describe yourself as a Christian—Come to Christ.

- You might be here this morning because something’s missing, you might be here this morning because you’re looking for God.
- Here’s the slightly unnerving but beautiful truth: God is already looking for you.
 - And he’s gone before to bring you here...
 - That you might know his love.
- And nothing—can I repeat that, nothing—is preventing you from believing in him.
 - The **good news about Jesus** is for everyone.
 - Since the beginning, people have struggled to believe this.

- The eunuch thought his race or social standing would put him on the outside.
 - Maybe you feel the same for different reasons—that your mistakes, your failures, your current struggles might put you on the outside.
 - But Jesus came for sinners—and that’s all of us.
 - If you’ve ever felt you don’t belong—you belong with Christ and you belong in this church.
 - Put your faith in him now—he’ll forgive you, fill you with purpose and assurance in this life, and then give you eternal life to come.
 - And then come talk to me:
 - We’d love to baptize you and help you get connected to our church!
 - We all need people to walk with us on the road.
- If you feel that tug this morning, you feel it because he’s already gone before.
 - He’s been stirring, arranging, and preparing—all you need to do is come.
 - Nothing prevents you—because he’s already looking for you.

2. If you would describe yourself as a Christian—let this truth shape at least two areas of your life.

- **First, let it give you courage to—Share Your Faith.**
 - Not out of guilt. Not out of pressure. Not because you should be doing more.
 - But because knowing that God goes before you takes the pressure off.
 - Philip didn’t create this moment.
 - He didn’t stir the eunuch’s heart.
 - He didn’t orchestrate the timing.
 - He didn’t write Isaiah 53.
 - He didn’t even know what he was walking into.
 - He was simply told: Rise and go.
 - When he arrived, he discovered that God was already there.
 - All he had to do was step into what God was already doing.
 - Let us not forget that we’ve been given the same command: Go.
 - But let us go knowing what Philip discovered on that desert road—when we arrive, God is already there.
 - When you share your faith:
 - You’re never at the start of someone’s story with God.
 - And you’re rarely the end of it.
 - Most of the time, you’re somewhere in the middle.
 - I remember one mission conference speaker, Randy Newman, explaining it this way:
 - Coming to Christ is like moving from A to Z.

- You may not walk them to Z—but a prayer, a conversation, a word about Jesus might help them move from D to G, or from L to P.
 - And ultimately—we don’t need to worry about it:
 - We don’t convert anyone.
 - We don’t change hearts.
 - We don’t control outcomes.
 - We simply obey—and trust that God weaves our small acts of faithfulness into his much bigger story.
 - When the Spirit nudges you, speak.
 - No pressure, no anxiety, no forcing it.
 - Just a quiet confidence that long before you opened your mouth, God was already at work.
- **Second, let it encourage you to—Trust the Lord.**
 - Philip found himself on a desert road—from revival to obscurity, from crowds to the unknown, from visible fruit to having no idea what God was doing.
 - Maybe you’re on a desert road right now.
 - Waiting on news.
 - Walking through illness.
 - Facing uncertainty in your family.
 - Feeling insecure at work.
 - Living with questions that haven’t been answered.
 - Or simple in a season that feels tough.
 - Dear ones—the Lord is with you, and he goes before you.
 - Into that diagnosis. Into that decision. Into that conversation. Into the unknown.
 - Of course you may not see what he’s doing yet.
 - Philip didn’t. The eunuch didn’t.
 - Often, we only recognize that God went before us when we look in the rearview mirror.
 - But he is not reacting, scrambling, or surprised by what you’re facing.
 - The uncertainty of the moment can become an opportunity—an invitation to move deeper into his love and care: You belong to the God who goes before.
 - Jesus is familiar with the desert path.
 - When things are challenging, when anxiety rises, when the unknown road fills you with fear—whisper to yourself: God goes before.
 - And keep going.

CONCLUSION

- Whatever road you’re on today, whatever unknowns lie ahead, go confidently.
- In faith, obedience, and assurance—because God goes before us.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*.
- Ray Cortese, *The Mission: Clarified, Mobilized, Empowered*.
- Dennis E. Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*.
- Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Acts*.
- Alan Thompson, *Acts: A Commentary*.
- N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone—Part 1*.

Endnotes

¹ N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone—Part 1*, 135.

² I first heard the connection to Isaiah 56 in Tim Keller's, *The Gospel to the Ethiopian*, accessed [here](#) on 2/19/26.